

LETTERS

SURVIVAL IS TO OVERCOME

Dear CPF:

Greetings! My name is Mikhail Makhasen and I'm 26 years old. I'm writing from the Corcoran SHU, where I've spent the last seven years of my life. I'm serving LWOP. This brief letter and the attached poem are in response to your issue #24 topic, "Survival in Prison."

Survival in prison means something different to each of us. It is improbable that a single answer will sufficiently cover each circumstance or solve every problem that one will face behind these walls. Life is always complicated, and unique situations confront us on a regular basis. For one man, survival means finishing his sentence and getting back to his family in the free world. For another, it is staying away from drugs or not getting stabbed. For some, survival is an accomplishment of some particular goal, the fulfillment of a task. We all are different in this respect.

The essence of survival is to overcome; to rise above ourselves, our mistakes. It is to confront our peculiar situation and reach for higher ground. Adversity and weakness are a part of life, and survival means surmounting them both. From experience I've learned that my most formidable enemy is the one within myself, and oftentimes survival simply boils down to remaining human in an inhumane environment.

The following poem is a humble expression—a brief overview, if you will—of a path which I myself have traveled, as a Christian, the conflict between good and evil is my daily reality, and so I've entitled my poem "Overcoming." To survive doesn't mean to stand in place; it is a call to move forward, to make progress.

Thank you for your time and for this opportunity. May God bless your labor of love!

—Mikhal Makhasen, Corcoran, CA

OVERCOMING

Without a vision people perish,
In darkness groping without light
Ourselves we lose what we cherish
Without guidance no wind is right.
We hope for progress minus the struggle,
Achievement's glory without a fight,
Savoring peachy dreams in a bubble —
Yet unwilling to reach for new heights...
By sitting still, we'll never find our peak

We have to ask: What is it that we seek?
High-powered speech doesn't equal action
Fulfillment of a dream is what brings
satisfaction!

To dream a dream is just a start —
The fruit of deeds is first sown in the heart.
Behind these walls what glitters isn't gold
And plans miscarry when they have no aim.

When seeking emptiness and foolish fame
The spark of life grows dim and cold —
We rave and blame, but things remain the same...

Life is a rocky journey, but the goal is clear:

There is no boogie man conspiracy to fear,
Just look within — you'll find the answer near!

Survival means strength to change,
And it begins with a desire —
An outlook on life that's rearranged.
A worthy goal will spark the action's fire,
A renewed mind to lift you out of the filthy mire.

But you must seek and for it you must yearn

Don't be discouraged if you slip or fall —
This happens to us all.

Just get back up and let the fire burn,
Consuming obstacles both great and small.
It may be hard, but you must be courageous —

Step forward and let your heart expand,
It starts with you, and then becomes contagious.

The time has come to lend your hand.
Don't be afraid to show love and compassion

If someone falls, try to understand
Let loving others be your joy and passion
An all-consuming goal for benefit of all.
The dream is now a goal and not a fable,
To seek great things each man is able
Be it in prison or without
If you will move beyond the fear and all doubt

You will survive.
This doesn't mean "staying alive,"
But overcoming every circumstance —
A purpose-driving life is a worthy stance
And with God's help, it makes a difference.

HOW DO YOU DO YOUR TIME?

Dear CPF:

I am a prisoner at Salinas Valley State Prison and am writing to let you know that it is just as bad here as all the other prisons. We get almost no program. The c/os here

have their foot on our necks. We may never see canteen and packages here because no one cares and worst of all, the inmates don't want to stand up for themselves. As long as they have a T.V. in their cells, they seem to be satisfied. I don't think that's the right way of thinking. That's how the administration wants you to think!

I am 20 years old and have already spent eight years in prison. This is time out of my life. I wish I could help make prison better for myself and others but there are very few people who want change and are willing to risk their necks trying. It seems they'd much rather sit around and watch T.V. and sleep all day! Change will not come unless there are enough of us who want it.

Think about it. This is time out of your life. Wake up and make the best of it. There are 24 hours in a day. How do you do your time?

—Andrew Redd,
Salinas Valley State Prison

ATTACKING 'THE ROAD AHEAD'

Dear CPF:

I am a little disappointed that you gave Mr. C. Landrum six entire pages in your newsletter to rant and rave in his critique entitled, "The Road Ahead." He attacks everything that is oppressive to the common prisoner then turns around and attacks those who have fought long and tirelessly to try and lift the burden off the convicts' backs. It is obvious that C.L., although seemingly very articulate, prepared his exposé without taking time to conduct any "legal" research into the history of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). For one he advocates that prisoners abandon use of the prison grievance system and seek other ways to find redress. Since he knows little about the legal aspects of challenging conditions of confinement he needs to be educated on the fact that pursuant to both state and federal law, no prisoner can challenge any aspect of their conditions of confinement without first exhausting their administrative remedies, i.e., the prison grievance system.

He attacked the newly created Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY) referring to those who have opted to reside therein as "soft," and

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

By Ed Mead

It is the monthly volunteer night here at the California Prison Focus office, and this evening we CPF volunteers are gathered around the big table answering prisoner letters. While every prisoner letter is read, there is no way we can answer them all. So we try to pick out the most important ones and respond to them.

To help us with this process, letter writers should understand that we are not a legal aid service for prisoners. We cannot provide legal advice, do your legal copying, help you obtain an investigator, find you a lawyer, do mail forwarding, or support you in other areas dealing with your criminal conviction. We wish it were different, but CPF is made up of a small handful of volunteers with limited resources who simply cannot meet the huge demand for various forms of legal assistance and/or logistical support for your appeals. If your issue involves a class of prisoners, on the other hand, and addresses statewide or institution wide issues, CPF can be of assistance.

As a former prisoner activist who supported the outside organizations that supported prisoners, I find it interesting to read the letters coming in. They are nearly all "take" and very little "give." They want to take energy from our struggle rather than give it. When I was on the inside, even when slammed down, I could always hustle up a little something for my favorite publications and organizations. If not some money or stamps, then I could send them other forms of support or an article about what's going on inside the prison. That does not seem to be the case with many of today's class of prisoners—the "me" generation.

As the new president of California Prison Focus I am going to make some modest changes. One of these changes will be channelling our limited resources toward building CPF's membership, both inside and out, and to spend less time and energy hand-holding those who are thinking only about themselves. If we are going to shut down the SHU and address other pressing issues inside of California's prisons, we will need you to give us your energy and that of your friends and family members.

While in the process of preparing a mass mailer to SHU prisoners around the issue of 602s we recently had occasion to use the inmate locator to verify the addresses of 155 SHU prisoners at Corcoran who were on the CPF mailing list. Much to our surprise

78 of those prisoners we've been sending the newsletter to have been released, transferred, died, etc. In other words, in just that small sample, half of the prisoners were no longer at the address we had for them.

We have a print run of 5,000 copies, nearly 4,000 of which are sent to prisoners. We are sending 732 copies in to Pelican Bay, 788 copies in to Corcoran, and the rest to other prisons. Given the number of bad addresses, we could easily be sending two thousand copies to people who are no longer there. That's a lot of printing and postage money we could be using for other purposes.

So here's the deal, the CPF Board of Directors has decided that we will put a notice in this issue of the newsletter saying that if you want to keep receiving it you must send us a card or letter saying so.

Our database is a total mess. People who should be subscribed are not, and perhaps thousands who should not be are. With your help we are going to make the mailing list correct. Send a card or letter to:

California Prison Focus
c/o Subscription Verification
2940 16th Street, Suite B5
San Francisco, CA 94103

Be sure that your return address legibly written. If we can't read your name and address you've wasted a card and you're off the mailing list. You can further help us by letting us know when you are transferred or released.

But wait, there's more. This address correction is the first step in making this newsletter into a vehicle that can help bridge the gap between us and our loved ones on the outside, and to move our struggle for human and democratic rights forward. The second step is to buy in to this struggle by materially supporting the *Prison Focus* newsletter. While I am not going to dwell on this point here, I will be revisiting the subject in future issues. You see what we are doing; you see what we stand for. If this is your cup of tea then materially support us with your material and human resources.

At present Leslie and I do all of the selecting, editing, proofing, and layout of the newsletter. We would like to form a newsletter committee of CPF. Let me know if there are folks out here in minimum custody who would like to become part of this soon-to-be-formed CPF newsletter committee. We could use the help. ★

COMPUTERS AND REHABILITATION

Taking Responsibility for the Future

By Ed Mead

For many years I have railed against the approach taken by the prison-crats in connection with their role vis-a-vis the public's interest in being free from criminal victimization. It has been my position that the Departments' real objective lies in maintaining a smooth running prison system, not in serving the community's need for public safety. In addition to operating quiet prisons, DOCs seeks to project a public image that reflects the currently popular viewpoint on criminal justice issues. Today that outlook is one of being tough on criminals.

Despite an unprecedented prison building binge and the systematic overcrowding of prisoners, not just in California but nationally, the crime rate continues to happen. The state refuses to look at the social roots of this problem, such as high unemployment, widespread poverty, the growing gap between rich and poor, racism, etc., and instead they focus all their attention on the errant individual. "So what," they say, "if capitalism is incapable of providing enough jobs for everyone; the fact that you don't have work is proof that you are scum." In short, you are the sole cause of the problem and must accept all responsibility. Well, we can take a modicum of responsibility for changing that perception.

Some prisoners have been working to ensure that we are able to obtain employment when released to the outside world. One means of accomplishing this is to develop the skills necessary for finding a job. While the prison system does have some vocational programs it occasionally touts to the public as proof of its efforts to rehabilitate prisoners, these are generally both outdated and ineffective. In the last prison I was in, for example, we had a vocational machine shop in which all of the heavy machine tools, lathes, etc., came off of a World War II navy ship. Whereas in the real world of modern machining practices, machine tools such as lathes are newly built and guided by computers.

We are already disadvantaged as a result of our status as convicted felons; in order to get hired and to keep a job we almost have to be better at our duties than other workers. Since the hardware available to us for learning job skills is mostly outdated and our access to it limited, we need to focus on

learning skills that we can develop in our cells, independently of any state-run program. One of the few ways we can accomplish this is by building computer skills, learned in our cells on personally owned computers. While a prisoner at the Monroe prison in Washington State, we tried to develop our abilities in the computer field by first getting approval for having personally owned computers in our cells.

This was a long and difficult struggle. In the mid-1980s we spent 2½ years fighting to get permission to have personally owned computers. There was excuse after excuse, but with persistence and right on our side we slowly wore them down. Computers were eventually approved and we had them for three years without a single computer-related infraction being issued. During this period many prisoners were able to learn skills they would not have otherwise obtained, and are today working on the streets in the computer field as a direct result of this program.

There are many examples. Someone I'll call Bob was a construction worker on the outside. While on the job he fell from a roof he was working on and sustained a serious back injury. Because of his injury, Bob was physically unable to work. His disability payments were held up by red tape, leaving him both broke and disabled. He turned to dealing "speed" to make ends meet, an activity which ultimately landed him in prison. Bob's compensation payment finally arrived, years after he was imprisoned. Since his injury prevented him from going back into construction work, Bob bought a computer and learned how to use it in the privacy of his cell. When he was released he applied for a job in the computer field. Competing for the position were two people who had just obtained degrees in computer science. After interviewing the two graduates, the employer talked to Bob for two minutes and hired him on the spot (prior record and all). Why? Because Bob knew what he was talking about, on a machine language level, when it came to computers. John is another case. Today he owns his own computer business in Seattle. While he's not rich, John has made enough to buy himself a house and to be driving a new Dodge RAM pickup truck. Indeed, today my job title is "Computer Systems Manager" for a company I have been working for in San Francisco for the past eight years.

These are just some of the successes achieved during the three years we had

computers. There are many others. Of the fifty some prisoners who owned personal computers, about twenty of them were released while I was on the inside and shortly after my release. We tracked their post-release progress. Not a single one of them returned to prison! According to the federal government, the national recidivism rate is 67 percent. The point being, of course, that prisoners themselves implemented a training program that made the prison easier to run and reduced recidivism.

The program was so successful that the Assistant Director of Corrections sent a memo to every prison in the state, authorizing them to implement a similar inmate computer ownership program at their facilities, and he attached a copy of Monroe's inmate computer ownership policy for them to use as an example. Notwithstanding this progress and the absence of problems, a new director of the division of prisons was named who opposed the program. He promptly terminated it. We were given 30 days to ship our computers home.

Will allowing prisoners to have personally owned computers in their cells be coddling people who have offended against society? Herein lies the basis for the seemingly endless debate between efficacy of the punishment versus the rehabilitation approach to crime control. These philosophical concepts mask a very real social question. As demonstrated earlier in the example of the computers, the rehabilitative model has never been more than half-heartedly implemented by prison officials, despite the public's will. Oh, wardens became superintendents, guards became correctional officers, prisoners became residents, and prisons themselves were transformed in to correctional institutions. But other than the verbiage, very little actually changed. Then the absence of progress was blamed as the reason for going back to the punishment approach. The death penalty was restored, prison sentences significantly lengthened, paroles limited, prison living conditions eroded, training programs gutted, and so on. That is where we are at today.

What has this cruel, vindictive, and murderous approach to a social problem netted the community? Some years ago Washington state's top prisoncrat, Chase Riveland, was quoted in the *Seattle Times* as saying that "if the state continues to lock up criminals at its current rate everybody in Washington will be in a prison or working for one by the year 2056." Incarceration rates and costs show there are valid reasons for

this alarm.

I am not trying to pass personally owned computers off as some sort of penal panacea, but rather as a single example of what can be accomplished if prisoners themselves are able to implement vocational programs. The computers provide prisoners with job skills they would not otherwise have. With decent employment we don't return to prison. Progress is made. More, since the computers are purchased at inmate expense, this progress is made at no cost to the tax-payers. What could possibly be the objection to such programs?

Conservatives admit that the "get tough" philosophy has not succeeded, but argue that what we need is yet larger doses of the same old ineffective punishment medicine. They will cling to this belief, and have done so historically, until even minor offenses warrant the death penalty. More fear and terror and repression is always their only solution.

In feudal England this trend played itself out until such "crimes" as killing a rabbit on private land, cutting down a tree on a public lane, or picking a pocket were capital offenses. The ineffectiveness of this approach was demonstrated by the pick pockets who would ply their trade at the crowd that gathered for the public hanging of a fellow pick pocket. In other words, the punishment mongers will continue to prescribe larger and larger doses of violence, even after such things as jay-walking have become capital crimes subject to summary execution. It's the logical outcome of today's justice policies.

One thing is made clear by the overwhelming failure of the punishment approach, and that is that current trends in criminal justice thinking are terribly wrong. The answers are complex and well beyond the scope of this brief article, but a step in the right direction can be taken by allowing prisoners to organize and implement their own rehabilitation programs. When this task has been left to the prisoncrats it has always been less than half-heartedly implemented and inevitably fails. We as prisoners must take the responsibility for our own rehabilitation. Fighting for access the tools necessary to accomplish this task, such as personally owned computers, is a good step in the right direction. Although working for greater computer access won't by itself make the revolution, it is nonetheless an issue we as rights conscious prisoners should be working on. It is an important step toward our collective empowerment. ★

SURVIVAL IN PRISON

EDITORS' NOTE

The topic for this issue of *Prison Focus* is surviving in prison. We sent out a call for stories, tactics, strategies and philosophies on how people are making it inside and received a fair amount of submissions that you will find represented in many parts of this newsletter. Inside there is a letter and poem in "Letters," essays in the prisoner writing section such as "Cell Study" by Keith Reese, poetry, a new page that sends get well wishes to ailing prisoners, and excerpts from CPF's Survivors Manual published in 1997 that is still relevant today. We hope this newsletter inspires or helps to further empower you to make the best of your situation.

Please send topic ideas for the next year as well as submissions of artwork, letters and essays. PF25 is already in production but we are ready for your guidance on the rest. May you have a fulfilling and peaceful new year.
—Leslie DiBenedetto

CONTROLLING THE CONTROL UNIT

By Laura Whitehorn

To me the over-riding thing of importance in surviving my various stints in control units was to refuse to relinquish control! By that I mean: keeping always in mind the purpose of the control unit – i.e., remembering what the state was trying to accomplish by putting me there, and then using my own powers of understanding to resist their plan. Among other things, this meant:

- Making a schedule of my days, instead of allowing the cops to determine my days.
- Having several different schedules, and alternating them, to avoid having the days all melt into sameness, and to keep track of what day and date it was, etc.
- Using exterior signals, such as changes in light, shift changes, regular noises from outside my cell, to keep track of time. The first few weeks I'd note a sound or other objective occurrence, then yell for the cops to find out what time it was, etc.
- Developing several different forms of exercise for different days and conditions. One technique of control used in every unit I've been in is withholding or postponing rec time. Since exercise was a very important way I controlled my anger so that I didn't become upset or stressed, it was crucial for me to develop ways to avoid letting this necessity for exercise become one more tool for them to use against me. I learned yoga and did isometric weight-training in my cell, and I ran on the occasions I was able to go out to the rec yards.
- Developed some creative activity that allowed me to admire my own human creativity – i.e., draw, write, make things from what is available, etc. Reminding myself that my place in the universe was as a sentient, loving, creative human being, not a caged animal, was helpful.

(This is why so many prisoners turn out incredible drawings in ballpoint pen!).

- Learn something – undertake to study something and use the mind so I left each unit having grown rather than been diminished by the experience.
- Write letters – get pen pals if needed; some active communication with the outside.
- For me, as a political creature, it was essential to get a subscription to a major newspaper (I then managed to share it by smuggling it to another prisoner in the unit). I was fortunate to have friends who chipped in to get me the paper. I wonder if the Campaign to Stop Control Units could somehow get money or get people to get subs to weekly news magazines – Time or Newsweek, or a daily or weekly decent newspaper – for people in control units? In women's prisons and most control units, no news media are provided.
- I fought for every shred of what I was supposed to have a "right" to, based in the Code of Federal Regs, which governs the BOP. But it's hard not to get full of rage and frustration while doing this, so once in a while I would write a furious letter to the warden or someone else, saying everything I wanted and then tear it up. Therapeutic, to a point.

Warden Burkhardt of Alderson responded to my BP-9 (fed prison grievance form) protesting my isolation – he said I was being held in solitary because of my "associations and beliefs." Knowing what your enemy's goals are helps you a lot in resisting giving ground. In my case, on days when I felt (and was) particularly abused and mistreated, I could always find hope and strength in feeling it was an honor to be held in conditions of control – in the way Chairman Mao meant it in that old quote we used to love so much about it being a

good thing to be hated by the enemy.

Finally, one thing about control units is that, since their goal is to dehumanize, to destroy one's personality, each individual kind of needs to design her/his own program for survival, based in her/his identity and sense of what makes each of us human. How one person expresses and controls rage is not necessarily right for another – for example, for some people, keep busy is important; for others, maybe stillness and inward thought is important. What resources – internal and external – each prisoner has available make a big difference, too. (One reason why activist groups are so important!)

Finally, really, I do believe that every one who has spent time in prison, double for control units, suffers physical if not also mental damage. Having this recognized – say, by the international anti-torture forces – helps. I think it was Stuart Grassian who observed that the women in the Lexington High Security Unit developed illnesses as a result of the unit. When I read that, it helped me understand the damage to my own health that resulted or was exacerbated by the control unit time.★

Venceremos!

SURVIVORS MANUAL

In 1997 California Prison Focus and the American Friends' Service Committee published a book entitled *Survivors Manual*. Under the editorship of Holbrook Teter essays and letters by prisoners were compiled on the subject of how they survive while incarcerated. From practical to philosophical, prisoners from across the country explained what they did on a daily basis and from where they were coming. Here are three representative pieces from the book.

A REVOLUTIONARY STATEMENT ON SURVIVAL

By Sondai Kamdibe

I was asked by a friend what is the difference for someone who maintains strength and others who often cave in? My response was simple: "I use history as my guide." Afrikans have a "historical obligation" and duty to carry on the legacy and struggle of our ancestors. The terms upon which we exist here have always been that of a slave in service of the master.

The entire fabric of Amerikan society is riddled with racism and enforced via its institutions which ensure that Afrikans/blacks will not succeed or be given an opportunity to carve out meaningful existence or make an honest living by which to support one's family unless one is willing to part with his/her cultural identity and awareness.

To be revolutionary calls for the ability to practice revolution as a religion meaning you must study it to understand its principles, just as you would your Bible or Koran, etc. You must dig deep down within yourself and remove any impurities instilled by a diseased society. Just as you would when asking God to forgive your sins, one must be equally committed to destroying within oneself all the vestiges of that society which he/she desires to change. This means eliminating the values of the ruling class of that society and right petty aspirations of wanting to be like that class. If an individual was a liar and a cheat prior to embracing the revolutionary ideal, then a deep critical self-examination would be in order so as to purge all vestiges of that lie and cheat. Because to be revolutionary is to be as good as your word! This process does not and cannot occur over night. Thus before any real transformation can occur, the struggle must be waged and won with oneself!

Control units exist with their sole purpose being to crush the revolutionary spirit embodied without certain prisoners of consciousness aimed at crushing their resistance to fascist control and inevitably making them a tool of reaction for the state. The ideas of the state are embodied within the functions of the prison regime. The state is able to continue executing its political agenda through the prison regime is convincing the public through its vast propaganda network (the media) and intrigue, that control units are designed to preclude the consolidated functioning of some of the most violent prison gangs, with little public resistance to this overt display of fascism.

The state is allowed full latitude in exercising its authority in crushing political dissent. Sure these units contain prisoners who are anything but revolutionary or politically conscious, but then again how else is the state to accomplish its objectives without reactionary tools to fuel its motor? Here in California the political prisoner/prisoner-of-war class exists alongside perhaps the largest reactionary prisoner class in the nation who willingly offers itself as tools for the state – aiding it in its fascist political objective of discouraging political dissent and wholesales murder under the guise of "rival gang" warfare fighting to survive to control the prison.

To survive a control unit, one must have grasped the understanding that struggle is a life-long commitment, that it embodied all kinds of consequences none of which should deter one from continuing on. One must have grasped the principles of the revolutionary and be willing to die for those principles, - principles that are not swayed by the promise of some petty prison privilege or the assurance of leniency because the cave-in or surrender will not halt the fascist machine from moving forward with its objectives of total authoritarian rule.

Professor W.E.B. DuBois recognized this when he wrote nearly 45 years ago. He said that Amerika would eventually and inevitably come to a basic decision – either it would move toward workers self-management, anti-racism and a new democratic state apparatus, or it would lapse into authoritarian, racial barbarism and militarization of the work force and a descend into military fascism.

Comrade George echoed this powerful sentiment when he made the call for us to:

Settle your quarrels, come together. Understand the reality of our situation. Understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will die or live poor butchered half-lives as we do now if you fail to act.

Amerika has proven consistently that it is an enemy of the Afrikans, who mobilizes as we speak to deliver her final blow of dearth, destruction and total fascist rule. Control units are but a consequence of those who resist us, to deter those who dare to think about it. Therefore, using history as your guide, you will find the strength is already there. ★

ACTIVE

By D.Sheldon

To keep one's self mentally and physically healthy through a period of long-term isolation has been a challenge for myself as I know it has for others. Though I'm one of those rare persons who have beaten the million-to-one odds (at least to date). By doing one simple thing...keeping thyself extremely active, occupying the loads of free time with a daily crammed schedule. It all starts with a hour long exercise regiment which includes doing push-ups, jumping jacks, running in place, crunches, pull ups, chin ups, and stretching different muscle groups yet the most unique way I have discovered to keep the upper body in shape, is by taking a pillow case and filling it with heavy books and/or tons of personal and legal documents (you know the kind which are stuffed in clasp envelopes) and then using the open end of a pillow case as a handle to lift the one-half to three-fourth filled bag four different ways. (lifting with each arm, then both arms in the front of the body and behind, right above the shoulder blades. In all exercise is very important in a forced sedentary lifestyle, that to linger in a bunk all day long only results in health problem such as irregular heartbeats, hypertension, depress immune system and atrophy of muscles, which even I have been effected by after six years of isolation. The next thing I do is write. What I mean by this is drafting up articles/essays and now and then a poem mostly for the small press to counter-attack the hysteria dished-out against the prisoner class. This includes telling about the conditions within America's dungeon and the impracticalities of the criminal (in) justice system. This activity alone takes up the majority of my time and has had one positive effect and that's bringing the public's attention to the repressive conditions here at the Iowa state "warehouse" and the reality of the American prison system as a whole. In fact I encourage those similarly situated to pick up those ink pens or pencils, which ever is allowed and make a habit of communicating your experiences either as simply as keeping a journal which I do on a daily basis or sending letters to editors of the local newspaper to criticize an article or opinion you may have read which may have not been the or what one of those "let's get tougher on the criminal" opinions, that needs a person from the inside to rebut. Just keep in mind occasionally the editor will print the

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BARS NONE

Bars None is a small greeting card company my family started in 2002, the year my son was convicted of a crime that sent him to prison for the rest of his life. Our family's lives changed that day. How trusting and naive we were. We relied on our judicial system - attorneys, judges, and courts to deliver justice that never happened. Our family fell into the black hole of tangled rules and regulations, prisons, appeals, more rules and regulations, phone lines going in circles, lack of funding statements, time limitations, and not surprisingly a system that does not function in accordance with what it is intended.

What could we do? We were in shock and scared to death. There are no support systems for the families of incarcerated loved ones, and certainly little to no help. Nothing made sense; the more questions we asked, the more questions we had. To add to the legal nightmare we were going

through, my husband's health failed and we lost our home. How could we help our son now? I began to write, it became a form of therapy for me. As we dove deeper into the legal system of appeals, we realized we could do nothing for our son because we were poor. So we created "Bars None," at first... as a way to fund our fight.

An Innocence Project took on my son's case. What a blessing! As we work with them, we are finding so many voices not heard. So many incarcerated people desperate for help, with no one to turn to, with unfair deadlines and unattainable price tags. Our mission for Bars None has changed. We hope one day to support the Innocence Projects that are so needed for our lost and desperate incarcerated.

We chose Bars None as the name because through our belief in God, my family found a way to hold on. We truly believe that no matter if you are behind bars or not, our spirit is as free as we ourselves

will allow it to be. Our greeting cards are made of high quality card stock, double folded to help with keeping the cost down, and this leaves more room for writing a letter inside. The covers are mostly photographs we've taken ourselves. We also have art and poetry from inmates. We have a variety of over 170 cards to choose from including Birthday, Spiritual, Congratulations, Encouragement, Holiday, Humor, Inmate created cards, Love, Sympathy, and Thank You categories. They are available online for anyone with Internet access or you can write for a free catalog. The cards are inexpensive and available to inmates with no charge for shipping and inmates can pay with stamps if they choose. Please visit our website at: www.storesonline.com/site/barsnone or write to the address below. ★

*Bars None
PO Box 78016
Stockton, CA 95267*



Photo credit: Bernice Foxliberzon@aol.com

Comrade activists Mo Nishida and Bato Talamantez meet to discuss future political prisoner conference (Los Angeles, October 2005).

Long time prison activist "Mo" Nishida from the national Jericho movement and field rep Bato from California Prison Focus met on Bunker Hill downtown Los Angeles to continue discussion planning for a much needed national conference that brings together support for Asian, Chicano, Latino, middle-eastern and black political prisoners forgotten and often overlooked such as Yu Kukumuru, Alvaro Luna Hernandez, Paul Redd, Ramsey Muniz and many other politically conscious

prisoners that the public has little or no information about.

It has long been estimated by prison activist ... That amerikkka has literally thousands of politically active behind-the-walls prisoners doing a combined tens-of-thousands of years. Inside a hundred relatively unknown prison gulags across amerikkka and elsewhere who get little to no support because of the isolated and remote world in which they languish. Fight the PIC. Orale ★

THE CDoC CHANGES ITS NAME

This is a time of momentous change for this agency, as well as for the boards and departments that report to the newly created California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

It is also a time of transition, as the state migrates toward an evidence-based approach to corrections and rehabilitation....

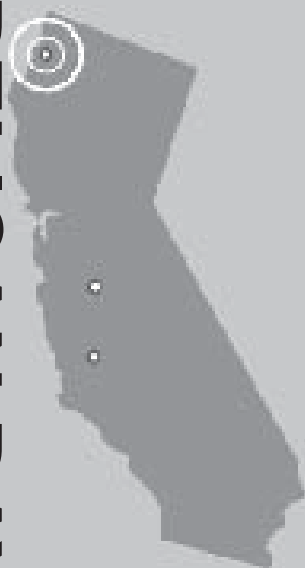
In May, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation that created necessary reforms to the California's Correctional and Rehabilitation Mission.

On July 1, the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency and the departments and boards within the agency became the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. This plan replaces a management structure that has been in place for more than 25 years and provides for better management of one of the largest correctional systems in the nation. ★

The address is:
Roderick Q. Hickman
Secretary, California Department of
Corrections and Rehabilitation
1515 S Street, Suite 502
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 323-6001

*From the CDCR webpage:
<http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/>*

PELICAN BAY



PELICAN BAY UPDATE

By Mary Rubach

Our last investigative visit to Pelican Bay was in May. The next scheduled visit is to take place on October 20 and 21. In the interim we have compiled the following tidbits mostly from correspondence:

First, a new program will begin for a few SHU prisoners who will be transferred to the Transitional Housing Unit. We are told the prisoners will be provided with classes designed to help them adjust to life outside. They are not required to debrief. It would appear that the CDCR* may be introducing this program to demonstrate how it rehabilitates prisoners.

On September 7, CDCR heard public testimony on their proposed emergency regulations for Administrative Segregation. If these pass, one-month reevaluations will be replaced by discretionary three or six month evaluations. It was stated that the cost of housing a prisoner in Ad Seg is \$90,000. It has been reported to us that numerous suicides have taken place in these units. One can hardly avoid the question: "how many suicides will there be if the stay is six months long before a prisoner has a hearing on the status of his segregation?" The fact is some people placed in Ad Seg are victims of crimes, not perpetrators. Also, prisoners are sometimes segregated prior to being charged so thus unjustly punished when a charge is put forth. Where there is a charge it is often of possession of a deadly weapon, and some are protesting

their innocence saying the weapon did not belong to them. The charge of conspiracy to murdering a peace officer is also being used against prisoners and many are exonerated some months later. The abuse of the Ad Seg program would appear to be the direct result of having too many Ad Seg cells (many built within the last year) and the simple temptation to fill them for no other than fiscal reasons. The writer would welcome comments.

Meanwhile, prisoners are being kept in SHU as active gang members or associates beyond the six-year limit, in some cases because of their association with organizers or sympathizers of Black August—a month-long time of reflection and celebration of Black culture and history. Has true gang activity diminished and have prisoners' infractions also become so rare that it is difficult to keep those SHU cells filled? God forbid that any should remain empty however few prisoners have the criteria for placement in them!

In A yard a prisoner reported that he feels unsafe. Reason: there is a great deal of fighting between whites and blacks and the leaders try to rope in prisoners of their skin color though they do not want to be involved. No investigation into these incidents are conducted so the instigators are not identified and suitably housed elsewhere.

There does not appear to be any improvement in the 602 process. An attempt will be made by CPF to identify where it breaks down. In some cases, it seems only too easy for the staff to argue that allegations are false and then issue a 115 to that effect.

Prisoners have not been complaining about a cut in supplies of toiletries, coffee, envelopes, etc. although these were threatened. I look forward to more information.

Finally, is it not good news that Judge Henderson has asked John Hagar, special master for Pelican Bay, to make some improvements in the health care services while an administrator is being sought? He can be expected to hire more medical staff, we understand. ★

**As of July 1, the California Department of Corrections has changed its name to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. See page 8 for more information.*



GEORGIA JACKSON, MOTHER OF GEORGE AND JONATHAN DIES

"All prisoners are my sons"

Georgia Jackson has died of natural causes. She was 86 years old. To her great credit, she raised two righteous revolutionaries whose actions will impact our historical liberation struggle for generations to come.

Martyred at a very young age—George at 29, Jonathan at 17—Georgia Jackson's sons' legacy inspired Black August, a revolutionary phenomenon that continues to grow and spread to all parts of the globe in commemoration of our revolutionary movements and freedom fighters.

Georgia Jackson will be buried at Mt. Vernon, Illinois next to her sons and other kin. May she rest in peace. ★

—Kiilu Nyasha



LONG LIVE THE SPIRIT OF ROSA PARKS

Rosa Louise McCauley Parks died Monday, Oct. 24 in Detroit. She was 92. Born in Tuskegee, Ala. Feb. 4, 1913, in a heavily segregated South, she rose to prominence by refusing to ride in the back of a bus which would lead supporters to call for an 18-month bus strike in Montgomery, Ala. and from that event ensued a growing civil right movement that caught fire throughout the country. She is considered the mother of the civil rights movement in this country.

This is a sad day for freedom loving people the world over. I had the opportunity and honor to interview Mrs. Parks by phone, along with her assistant, Elaine Steele, some years ago on Pacifica's KPFA. It was truly a memorable occasion. I read her autobiography "My Story" and was quite surprised by its revelations. I encourage you to read it if you haven't already. ★

—Kiilu Nyasha



TWO FLUSHES AN HOUR

Two flushes an hour. One may wonder what this statement signifies. Well unfortunately it pertains to the new “water conservation” program in the SHU, building 4B3, at Corcoran. Facility Captain Lopez sent out a memorandum to all of the prisoners in the SHU at Corcoran outlining the new policy. Apparently, all of the toilets in the cells will be fitted with brand-spanking new “flush valves.” These valves are, as the memorandum states, “set to flush each hour when called upon by the...inmate population.”

Captain Lopez goes on to say, “Once the toilets are flushed twice within an hour period they will not flush again until the next hour.” Lovely policy, no? The memo finishes with a comforting prospect for the future, “It is anticipated within the very near future that all SHU building and general population building will all be retrofitted with this new flush valve device.” There must be a *Buy One Get One Free* sale at The Home Depot coming up.

Letters sent out by the prisoners who have been subjected to this “water conservation” program do not, as one would assume, relay the message of unanimous approval. They are very upset with this new program, and feel that it is quite inhumane and detrimental to their health.

One prisoner writes, “A serious health hazard is created when waste is left in toilet bowls because mistakes are in timing flushes, when all the waste is not removed due

AILING AMIGOS
 FRIENDS AMIGOS COMRADES CAMARADAS...
 WE WANT TO LET OUR FRIENDS AND RELATIONS KNOW
 THAT WE ARE THINKING OF THEM

THAT WE REMEMBER EACH ONE OF YOU
 WITH OUR HEARTS AND ... GLAD THOUGHTS
 IN HAVING KNOWN YOU

FRIENDS AND RELATIONS ...
 GIVEN TO US BY THE SAME UNKNOWN CREATOR ...

OUR HEARTS ARE WITH EACH ONE OF YOU
 EACH ONE OF YOU MENTIONED AND UNMENTIONED

WE REMEMBER YOU IN YOUR AFFLICTION AND YOUR DISCOMFORT
 OUR THOUGHTS OF YOU ARE GOOD AND CARING
 AND THAT YOU SOON MEND

THAT EACH ONE OF YOU GETS WELL PRONTO AND
 REGAIN YOUR HEATH AND STRENGTH
 TO CONTINUE AS BEFORE

WE STILL HAVE GREAT NEED OF YOU HERE
 BUT DONT DESPAIR SHOULD YOU NOT LOOK OUR WAY AGAIN

Antonio “Tony”Gonzalez, Familia esposo papa Indio honorable pokesperson veterano mechista camarada All relationl. San Francisco @ Home Blessings. Kilroy old soljer pb veterano truck-accident multiple breaks injuries wheelchair bound @ Home mending. All our blessings. Jaime old time veterano with care and wisdom for all.. one time barber @ Q. southblock early 60’s.organ deterioration dialysis. Blessings Imari Obadele who founded the RNA. He is in his seventies and ailing. Ramsey Muniz recovering from major surgery in spite of many obstacles. Health and strength.
 GLAD THOUGHTS

to the ineffective flush rate, or when the prisoner [gets] involved in something else while waiting to be able to flush again and leaves waste products in the bowl.”

One could imagine the environment these flush valves create. Having to permanently live alongside a toilet is one thing, but having to withstand waste in that toilet as well is another. Along with health concerns, prisoners are worried about another product of this new program: tension with their cellmates. A prisoner states that the program can “cause conflict with your cellie if you accidentally use his flush.” A result I am sure nobody could have predicted, least of all Facility Captain Lopez.

It seems to be only a matter time before all cells at Corcoran are fitted with these new valves. Hopefully, this program does not spread to other California prisons. But would it really surprise anyone if it did? Of course not. ★

-Matthew Beristianos

NO SURRENDER
 writings from an anti-
 imperialist political prisoner

Abraham Guillen Press and Arm the Spirit are happy to announce the publication of David Gilbert’s book “No Surrender: writings from an anti-imperialist political prisoner.” This 288 page book is an anthology of David Gilbert’s prison writings since 1981 until the present.

To order send \$20 (\$15 + \$5 shipping) in cash or cheques made out to “Abraham Guillen Press” and mail to:

Abraham Guillen Press
 C.P. 48164
 Montreal, Quebec
 H2V 4S8 Canada

HIV and HEP C IN PRISON

THE SILENT EPIDEMIC

By Brandi Taliano

My name is Brandi and I'm a lifer here at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF). I've been incarcerated for the last ten years. Every year I get a "life physical." I normally get this physical in January. In January 2002, I received my life physical and was told that if anything were wrong I would be informed. It was a hot August night (8 months later) when the news finally arrived. I reported to the telemed* doctor who informed me that I had hepatitis C and that I would be going out for a liver biopsy. My first reaction was, "Why did it take so long to tell me?" "These things take time," I was told. Well hell by then someone could parole not knowing they had hepatitis C and infect someone without knowing it. Also, I was unaware of the reason for the liver biopsy because I didn't know it related to hepatitis C and I was so dumbfounded that I didn't really think to ask.

On Oct. 3, 2002, I was transported to Madera Community Hospital (MCH) for the liver biopsy. At the hospital, I was told why I was having this procedure. The technician there told me that it most likely means that I have scarring. I still didn't realize that it was related to hepatitis C. And folks let me tell you, I'm no dummy. I just didn't make the connection because no one explained things. The technician also told me that the liver biopsy would feel like a little prick. Well, that little prick hurt like the dickens. I was numbed first (thank goodness) but that didn't stop the "little prick" from hurting. What really hurt and I mean hurt was after the numbness wore off. I couldn't cough, sneeze, hiccup, burp or do the thing that ladies don't do, without tears coming to my eyes from the pain.

Two weeks after the "little prick" biopsy, I was seen for a follow-up. At this follow-up, I was told that everything was normal. Now, normal to a lay person like me means that nothing's wrong, that I didn't have hepatitis C and with that thought in mind I went about doing my time. Then in October 2003, I was again ducated [told to visit] the telemed doctor. This time, the doctor told me that I had hepatitis C. I said, "What the hell are you talking about? The yard doctor told me that I was normal. Why in the hell did it take you so long to tell me? I had the biopsy 12 months ago!" Dr. J's response was, "Well, Ms. Taliano, I don't know why, I can't answer that. Maybe Nurse B has the answer." I swung my head to the left and looked at Nurse B, with that big question mark look on my face and she said, "I was cleaning up the files in my computer and I found it."

After I go the answer I was not satisfied with, Dr. J. informed me that I had to start Hep C treatments. The treatment was receiving one shot a week on Fridays and two Ribavirin pills twice a day. I was told that the treatment would make me sick and Dr. J. informed me of the side effects. Suffice it to say, I couldn't stand without feeling like I was hit by a truck and I felt like I hadn't slept for weeks all the time. To say I was the poster child for Rogaine is an understatement (my hair fell out). Five weeks of pure hell and I worked the whole time! Then Dr. J. called me to telemed and told me that I had had a bad reaction to the treatments and that they almost killed me. He told me my white blood count was so low that it scared him. I was terrified.

Dr. J. promised to monitor my blood and order Rogaine for my hair loss. He told me to get plenty of rest. Well, two weeks go by and no Rogaine. When I went back to telemed, Dr. J. told me that the prison's

chief medical officer refused approval for Rogaine. The CMO stinks.

Did you know that the amount of HIV infection in prison is at least eight times greater than the outside population and at least one-fourth of people living with HIV are incarcerated? HIV has been one of the most dangerous epidemics in the prisons. My prison, CCWF, provides some of the worst medical care for prisoners and contains the only "licensed" infirmary for women prisoners. This infirmary has been consistently investigated and sued since it opened in 1990.

Most prisoners who have any history of injection drug use are infected with hepatitis C. With few exceptions prison and jail administrators have tended to downplay and ignore the ramifications of the "Hep C epidemic." Even on the outside, the Centers for Disease Control have minimized the real impact of Hep C. The real problem is they don't think it affects them because 1) they are not in jail and 2) they don't use intravenous drugs. They are wrong. It impacts them in so many ways. If everyone got educated about HCV (hepatitis C) then shared that education with just one other person, then maybe we could spread the word as fast as the disease itself is spread. Then maybe we could prevent others from getting infected.

Did you know that approximately four million people in this country have Hep C? At least one-third of this population is in jail or prison. Let's do the math on these numbers. Over one million people in prison have Hep C. The numbers will keep growing unless we do something about it. Most prisoners are finding out that they tested positive for Hep C more than 10 years ago and no one even told them. Forget about germ warfare, we got Hep C.

One of the reasons no one knows too much about Hep C is the out-of-sight, out-of-mind attitude pushed by those on top. Since this is such a silent epidemic [that it can almost kill you without you knowing] and no one wants to talk about it, prisoners like me are stepping up to the challenge. It's time we educate ourselves so we can educate others and stop the spread of Hep C. ★

**At many California Prisons, HIV, hepatitis and other specialized medical care is provided by telemedicine which involves a doctor, who in this case was at the University of California – Davis Medical Center, examining and diagnosing a patient via a video screen.*

RESPECTING THE VALUE OF LIFE!

I was diagnosed with HIV, and my whole life has changed.
My CD-4 count is slowly declining, but my body feels the same.
Scared, Angry, and Alone, I thought about suicide.
But someone said; "I Love You Still," and the voice came from inside.
So many different organizations, just where do I turn
So much necessary information, for me now to learn.
I'm living my life healthier, to help prolong my days.
No Drinking, No Drugging, or Unprotected Sex – Yes it really pays!
I exercise daily, my body and mind, and now I'm feeling great;
And when the time is truly right, I know God will send me a mate.
Honestly & Shamelessly, I'll share my story with others.
With anybody who needs some hope, especially my sisters and brothers.
From secluded corporate America, to the rural antique shop;
Even to the local corner store, owned by mom and pop.
We have to stop the increasing numbers, whatever way it may take;
We have to educate the world, if only for our children's sake.
If you don't know your status, be responsible, go get tested!
With an (either, or) result, the time will be well invested.
HIV & AIDS is out of control, causing global strife;
Respect yourself and respect another by,
RESPECTING THE VALUE OF LIFE!

Vonique J. Sanders, aka Vonique Howard, Muncy, Pennsylvania

REPORT ON THE TREATMENT OF TRANSGENDER PRISONERS

The national human rights group Stop Prisoner Rape, in conjunction with the ACLU National Prison Project, today released a report calling attention to the treatment of transgender prisoners after the Supreme Court's 1994 ruling in the precedent-setting *Farmer v. Brennan* case.

The report, "Still In Danger: The Ongoing Threat of Sexual Violence against Transgender Prisoners," takes a look at some of the improvements and set-backs that transgender inmates have experienced since *Farmer v. Brennan* in efforts to secure humane treatment behind bars and to ensure they are not subject to sexual assault in prison.

A significant threat to the safety of this group comes from housing assignments that fail to make any accommodations at all for their gender identity. Transgender women behind bars continue to report that they are housed in the general population in male facilities and that they are sexually assaulted in detention.

The report presents a selection of first-person accounts by transgender prisoners, offering insight into the reality of sexual violence behind bars since the historic decision. "Still In Danger" also offers a wide range of recommendations to detention facilities to better protect their transgender inmates.

"It is discouraging that there is still such a long way to go in protecting transgender prisoners from sexual assault IN U.S. prisons," said Kathy Hall-Martinez, Interim Executive Director of Stop Prisoner Rape. "It is past time for corrections officials to stop making excuses and to adopt and implement adequate policies to protect transgender inmates from such assaults."

The complete text of SPR's report is available at <http://www.spr.org>. ★

FAMILIES NOT AS VICTIMS

By Vivian Moen

When my son was sent to prison under the Three Strike law for a minimum of 24-years-to-life, I was stunned. How was it possible for a non-violent offender to receive such a sentence? Then I read in the paper that a 26-year-old man got ten years for murder. Another man was only sentenced to seven years for rape. Where was the justice?

For almost two years I felt helpless. What could one person do? I wasn't knowledgeable about the justice system, how prison worked, or how to help my son with filing appeals.

The pain went clear to my knees and kept me down in spirit. I read the newspapers

and zeroed in on lenient sentences for violent crimes. I devoured everything I saw in print about prisons. Yet, I took no stand on any issue because I felt like a victim of our justice system right along with my incarcerated son. I never considered being able to change anything.

Then I came in contact with an activist group working to amend the three-strike law, Families to Amend California Three-Strikes (FACTS), I located the chapter in Orange County and became a member.

The men and women in this group were so learned about the law; they had met with legislators, interviewed with reporters, and wrote unending stacks of letters to lawmakers up and down the state. They attended many public forums and reached out to the media. Some would speak at the universities, and did segments about their three-striker loved ones for television. All members spent the majority of time on the streets educating the public about all the ramifications of the Three Strike law. They lobbied the legislators in Sacramento and rallied to amend Three Strikes on the capitol steps. One member of the group created professional looking literature about three-strikes and many other relevant issues. Many keep stacks in their cars and in their bags so that no opportunity to educate the public is lost.

After joining FACTS I seemed to remain in the victim mode during the first year. I felt that if I kept going to meetings I would find something I could do. Several months later they formed committees and put me on the Prisoner/Outreach Committee.

After two years I gained a wealth of knowledge and could hold my own in public. I was becoming a force to reckon with. In the process of learning facts to present to the public, it became evident that we all started the same way: cant knowledge of a legal system left us feeling victimized, with negative thinking that just one person has no clout.

But it was during my second year as an activist when I began to realize how much power one person dedicated to change actually has. Some FACT members have given me the courage to reach for higher goals. I gained many new skills along the way that have been put to the test over and over.

If we can learn to get over feeling like victims then people like us can make changes. ★

Check out FACTS at <http://www.facts1.com/> or 3982 So. Figueroa St #209 Los Angeles, CA 90037; (213) 746-4844.

PRISONER WRITING PAGES

THE PROHIBITION AGAINST TOBACCO: A STUPID LAW

By Eugene Alexander Dey

When I first came to prison in the early 1980s, an old convict warned me about the dangers of prison. He explained that life is cheap, and people lose their lives over the smallest things – even a smoke. While prison does foster rather unfortunate norms, getting killed over a cigarette seemed a bit excessive for the times. Back then tobacco and matches were issued out with our weekly supplies, along with toilet paper and soap.

“They gave us some (roll-your-own) with our fish-kits when we first drove up,” said Thomas Wallen, from Kern County, in reference to the initial supplies issued to new arrivals (fish).

That was a different era, and prison officials quit supplying tobacco in the late 1980s. Despite witnessing a lot of regrettable chaos and violence over the years, I’ve never seen the cigarette scenario play out. But this is a new era, and things are about to change. As of July 1, tobacco has been banned in the California Department of Corrections [and Rehabilitation]. This prohibition applies to both staff and prisoners alike.

California has joined a handful of states where tobacco has been outlawed in their prison systems. When the embargo takes effect, cigarettes become the drug of choice. Suddenly, a \$10 can of roll-your-own sky-rockets in value, climbing to \$500 a can or more. Fueling this persevering black market force is the self-destructive and hopelessly addicted nature of the incarcerated.

Since the CDoC [now the CDCR] has been identified as the most violent prison system in the country by numerous sources, including the Supreme Court earlier this year in a prison segregation case, this ban will likely further exacerbate the problems plaguing an already volatile demographic.

“They’re making this an even more unstable environment than it already is,” said Mitch Farrell, a 40-year-old prisoner from Del Norte County.

The correctional officers don’t exactly embrace the tobacco restriction either. Just the other day, while in the process of confiscating a prisoner’s tobacco, the officer expressed his discontent with this new

measure. Many officers have made similar comments.

One of the impediments to the CDCR’s smooth transition into a tobacco-free atmosphere is the fact so many prison employees use tobacco themselves. Moreover, when the demand among the inmate population hits its peak, someone absolutely will supply it.

“Is there any doubt who’ll be bringing it in?” said Robert Hagensen, a 53 year-old prisoner from San Fernando Valley. “It’s a stupid law. Do you blame them?”

While expressing sentiments shared by many, Hagenson explains it’s still very early in the embargo, only a few weeks old. However, to the chagrin of many, staff and prisoner alike know the pangs of addiction will slowly take on a deadly level of seriousness.

“Many of these guys have not been in their right minds since they took the tobacco,” said Hagenson. “I’d imagine it’s going to get ugly.” ★

A RAISE? FOR WHAT?

By Wendy Bess

They’re paid to protect us but they don’t. They’re paid to feed us certain nutritional values daily but they don’t. They’re paid to make us well physically and mentally when we become sick but they don’t. Yet through all those simple tasks they are asked to perform daily and don’t, one thing remains the same: they want raises.

Very few women fight, few to none have weapons or other major contraband and we’re not literally trying to kill one another, so how exactly are we supposed to understand being treated like the men, often ignored, berated and seldom heard or understood?

Those of us with chronic medical care problems aren’t getting proper care and treatment because of constant changes in our doctors and getting lost in the system, improper treatment from incompetent doctors, or just straight medical neglect or indifference. Are we any less human because we require a little more care and attention? They feed us undercooked, overcooked and sometimes rotten food. They get away with

feeding us meals that children wouldn’t get full off of much less eat, but they eat great cafeteria food in front of us.

A little fair treatment based on gender, better medical care, some decent food, and school programs is all we ever really asked for. If and when that happens then maybe the idea of a raise wouldn’t sound so ridiculous. ★

CALIFORNIA VS NORTH CAROLINA

By Larry D.

Recently there was a story in the news media about a 65-year-old prisoner by the name of Junior Allen, who was just released from a North Carolina prison after serving 35 years for stealing a black and white television set. This story attracted widespread attention mainly because other prisoners convicted of murder, rape and child molestations were being released, while Junior Allen remained in prison for 35 years.

But hey, isn’t this the same form of extreme punishment being practiced here in California under the Three Strikes law? There are more than 4,000 men and women sitting in California prisons with life sentences for stealing things like aspirin, video tapes, batteries, golf clubs, Levis, for joy riding, receiving stolen property and minor drug possession—all under the pretext that they are dangerous criminals. Our governor, in the name of business as usual, went on TV last November, and deceived the public into voting “no” on Proposition 66, which would have brought about needed reforms to an unjust/unfair law, not to mention the sky-rocketing cost of warehousing nonviolent offenders in state prisons. But the governor said 26,000 murderers, rapists and child molesters would be released under Prop 66, when in fact there are only about 4,000 nonviolent men and women serving life sentences under this law. Most are drug and alcohol abusers who have received no treatment, and have repeatedly been sent back to prison for drug- and alcohol-related offenses. Most have never committed a violent crime, and were coerced and pressured into pleading guilty to most of their prior offenses (some were crimes they did

not commit). The few who have committed prior violent offenses, have already paid their debt to society many years ago.

So yes, what has happened in North Carolina with 65-year-old Junior Allen is happening right here in California, but on a much large scale. Everyone else is being paroled and released, but the 4,000 non-violent offenders under California's Three Strikes law will remain in prison until they have served at least 25 years of a life sentence.

Californians have much more in common with North Carolina than they realize, and should work towards reforming this law. Otherwise there will be 4,000 more 65 year-olds like Junior Allen in the next 25 years. ★

CELL STUDY: ESSAY #22

By Keith Reese

There is an old adage which proved to be true: "doing time can be easy or hard." That adage is no longer embraced. Due to long lockdowns, absence of academic and vocational education, deprivation of rights and privileges on level IV 180 facilities, doing time is extremely hard. But even in light of all the negative adversities, you can still try and resurrect the positive option of the dead adage. To keep your life from regressing further into barbarism while incarcerated, you have to educate and civilize yourself. Prison can become your halls of ivory, by being disciplined and tenacious towards positive things. Learning things is the best method to keep cynical thoughts at bay. Tell yourself that you intend to do easy time. Displace the misplaced taboo that you no longer have a choice on how time is done. Start by living exciting adventures vicariously through books. Find interesting things to learn, i.e., the stars, the periodic table of elements, et cetera. Take your mind away from the depressing doldrums of incarceration. Don't lose your identity to the corruption of prison politics. Reconnect with the beauty of the world by reading on subjects that can be used in your reality. On the next lockdown, cultivate your mind with knowledge no one else possesses. You will pride yourself on such intense study. To forge myself into a stronger person I've committed to memory various facts and nomenclature, such as:

- The 88 constellations (alphabetically)
- 109 elements
- 66 moons in the solar system
- Kings and Queens of England

- Emperors and Governments of Rome
- 43 Presidents
- 10 Commandments (verbatim)
- 50 States and capitols
- Gettysburg Address
- New Colossus by Emma Lazarus
- 7 continents
- 7 ancient wonders of the world

Committing this information to memory starts a regimen of keeping your mind in order. More importantly, it prevents depressing and angry thoughts from overwhelming you. Studying should not be viewed as a difficult and torturous task. Find your own method of imbibing knowledge soon, and your memory will become eidetic. I've learned so much on my own curriculum, the resident academicians could learn a few extra lessons from my novel system. When the long lockdowns come, I keep my alpha-waves active with positive things. Often times, noise and other disturbing distractions may affect our aptitude. A recommendation: fold two square pieces of wet tissue, put them in your ears. The tissue should be folded several times until it is about one-quarter inch square. Crushing tissue into a ball is less effective. You can have a "beautiful mind" even under the harsh circumstances of uproar. Study hard, because the cell is your most conducive place to study. ★

SURVIVING THE SHU

By Walter J. Farmer

A very good friend of mine came to me and asked if I would be willing to take some time away from my day and share with you my experience in the SHU. It was a lot to ask as I have tried to put so much of it behind me. But the years of wisdom always stay with you. And that is a good thing. I'm not going to try and sound all profound and deep with you, as many of you are either in this same predicament, or have a loved one inside the SHU. What I hope all of you gain from my experience is that life is too short to lead with hate and retaliation.

I came to prison in 1983 for murder in the first degree. I was 23, and had never been anywhere, or seen anything, until I went to Folsom. There were rules to walking the line (as there are anywhere you go), and there was a lot of violence.

In 1988 I was working in the housing building as a barber when a correctional sergeant decided he was going to get in my face and disrespect me over (what I con-

sidered) some lame drama. We both got stuck-on-stupid, and the next thing you know he and I were lockin' horns. Well, I later got found guilty at a disciplinary hearing, and do a SHU term for assault on staff. The next thing I know, I was validated as a "gang associate" and sent up to PBSP-SHU, indeterminately.

I arrived at the Bay in 1990, and immediately took to learning civil law, and was trying to shake my "indeterminate" sentence that was preventing me from returning back out to the general population. Ironically it was an uphill battle, as here I was, in a stagnant environment where doing any type of legal research, shepherding case law, or getting legal work photocopied was a fishing expedition, in and of itself. Then there were the people with mental health problems doing their part to keep a feller awake. All the legal documents, of course, had to be written with pen filler.

My relationship with my family and friends on the outside grew distant as they simply could not grasp the reasons that I had to quite possibly live the rest of my years in isolation.

By 1995 I was finally in the civil court with my litigation, and, wow, talk about a weird experience. Here I was, with my hand-written civil suit, going up against the attorneys that represented the state's attorney general's office, with computers, printers and Lexus-Nexus at their disposal. The rules in the SHU were designed to deter prisoners from legally challenging the system. We were not allowed to talk to or help each other while at the law library about legal matters. They even made a policy that restricted prisoners from helping each other unless they were in the same unit. We weren't always comfortable placing our litigation in just anybody's hands. I lost my case in 1996 due to the 1995 ruling of *Sandin vs. O'Conner*.

I managed to learn of a guy that I knew when I had first arrived at Folsom who (from all his years in the SHU) was now in PSU [Pelican Bay's mandated mental health unit for SHU prisoners] playing in his feces. And this was once an intelligent fellow. What caused him to nut-up like that?

As the years progressed, violence in the SHU escalated to the point of where many prisoners were no longer allowed to have a cellie. (That can sometimes leave you feeling isolated and frustrated because you spend 22-and-a-half hours a day in this cell.)

I came to a point in my life where I had to ask myself what I wanted out of life. What am I getting out of this life? Where do I see myself down the road in a few years? Before I answered this, I had to be completely honest with myself, and struggle with the option of putting my life in danger (with other inmates) in order for the staff to feel comfortable with me being around them and other inmates. For fifteen years, the mere thought of going through the state's debriefing process was one that was non-negotiable with me. The idea of having to hang up my gonads in order to see daylight left a bad taste in my mouth. But I kept thinking of the past fifteen years and the loss of both my grandparents and my father. I did not give them much in life to feel proud about. I also had a woman in my life that I was very much in love with.

In 2002 I made the conscious decision to disassociate myself from the gang, and I went through the debriefing process. Now I know that at this point many of your readers are going to trash this paper. And that's your choice. For me there was no life in the SHU. Out here you no longer answer to anyone for your actions.

Outside SHU you have the opportunity to get involved with so many programs, including lectures with college students that come from colleges and universities. You have an incredible opportunity to get involved in and focused on your children, and loved ones. ★

[Ed Note: While California continues to have SHUs, CPF believes all programs and programming should be available to those prisoners so designated.]

NOTHING NEW IN NEW FOLSOM

By Henry Hill

I came into the system at age 20, knowing a whole lot of nothing and nothing about a whole lot. I was angry, and didn't know why or whom to direct my anger. I was into self-hate as many of my generation, so I thought it was cool to attack my brothers and disrespect my sisters.

Fortunately, upon catching my SHU term in February 1999, I was be schooled by some conscious Brothers who showed me a better way to conduct myself. Upon my release back to mainline in July 2003, I was able to continue my education by more Brothers of consciousness.

So, I don't spend much time on activities

centered on nonsense. I love my people, but I try not to waste energy on tearing down others. For one, I don't have to tear down another to uplift myself. Secondly, we as a people tend to use the hurting and hating of others as a substitution for healing and loving self. Without the latter, the former is in vain.

Many Brothers here talk about how bad we're being treated, yet pass up on just about every opportunity to make necessary changes. Many are only out for themselves. It hurts more than anything else. You can't help but wonder, "What happened between birth and now that's made them this way?" There are some beautiful Brothers here, but you would never know by the ugliness being portrayed. I don't sleep during the day, and the television doesn't come on until 5 pm, unless it's the weekend or something of true importance is on. You can't build properly neither inside nor out if you're sleeping or watching television. Anyone telling you different is only making excuses for or attempting to justify their lack of discipline.

I respect people of action, not those of just words, no matter how they're put together. How can I tell someone what needs to be done if I'm doing the exact opposite? That "Do as I say, not as I do" must cease amongst our people. It has become an excuse not to do.

Even though the majority of my focus is on my people, I don't limit myself to just us, because you can learn from and be helped by anyone. Though I hate to admit it, you may need their assistance because your own have abandoned you. Especially when it comes to these guards. They're so worried about the appearance of favoritism; they treat you worse than any other. It's the "Field" and the "House" all over again.

The sad part is that I receive disdain from my people for my thoughts and conduct. It's truly depressing when you see how brainwashed some of us have become. But I refuse to give up on us as a People. If we who can, give up, who will help those who feel they can't? Our oppressors? How do you think we got here?! ★

THE REVOLUTION HAS NOT BEEN TELEVISED

By Andre' Johnson

As a young man entering prison twenty-three years ago I found myself caught in a vortex of chaos and confusion. I was groomed and guided

towards a life of death and destruction and the revolution was not televised.

I turned a five-year prison term into a life sentence without even leaving prison, but as a new a man who has regained his self respect and individuality, I now can see the world with open eyes, and the revolution has not been televised.

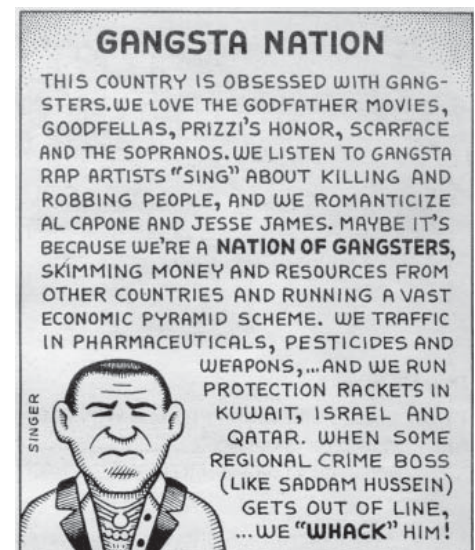
Losing loved ones while incarcerated gives a new perspective on life. I have sustained a life style made available by having a viable support system in place. And the revolution has not been televised.

Anger is perpetuated by the horrible conditions we must endure each day, and it took me several years to master the art of not becoming angered over matters I have no control over and yet the revolution has not been televised.

The psychological tormenting of specific prisoners by the CDCR will always be conducted by some sadistic cops who seem to gain some pleasure in this practice. And yet the revolution has not been televised.

For every action there is a equal reaction. Prisoners and convict alike must learn to harness the power among the masses and not allow the CDCR to instigate a situation that will result in loss of privileges ad property then justify it by some reactionary action taken by some small minded individual bent on creating an atmosphere of hostility. And the revolution has not been televised.

The televised revolution will never take place because that old cliché is nothing more than the figment of imagination of a few, who are fixated with the past and they use it to captivate the minds of those naïve enough to believe that it takes armed struggle to bring about a true revolution, which simply means change. ★



THE CALIFORNIA HABEAS HANDBOOK

4.04 Edition (December 2004)

By Kent A. Russell

Review by Eugene Alexander Dey

Decades ago prisoners could file a writ on just about anything – in some extreme cases, even on toilet paper. Back then, right before the war on drugs took full effect, the judiciary felt compelled to liberally construe anything that came across their bench to determine if it had merit.

Once the pendulum of draconian justice began to swing, true liberal construction was replaced by a gauntlet of specialized forms and unforgiving regulations. In 1996 Congress passed the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), a heartless reconstruction of habeas corpus and the predecessor to the war on terrorism's Patriot Act.

Help is at hand. For those intrepid sojourners who insist on advancing their post-conviction claims, Kent Russell, famed attorney, author, and post-conviction expert, created *The California Habeas Handbook*. This easy-to-read publication is designed to help the California prisoner navigate through the maze of state and federal courts, despite the AEDPA.

The *Handbook* differs from most law books in its easy-to-understand format and language. The 4.04 edition explains how to exhaust properly raised state claims, and why state courts often hold petitioners to difficult standards.

From the onset, Russell fleshes out when the AEDPA's unforgiving one-year statute of limitations "clock" begins to tick, and how the "time-bank" actually works. He emphasizes properly filing federalized and timely claims in order to avoid a procedural default – the litigious end for a vast number of pro per pleadings.

Arranged in nine chapters, chapter one begins by explaining how the *Handbook* is intended for unrepresented, non-capital "state" prisoners challenging a conviction or sentence. Chapters two through five offer a crash course on state and federal habeas corpus. Chapters six through eight are arranged as a "how-to" guide to overcome state and federal barriers to relief.

On his coverage of the federal proceedings, Russell goes into even greater detail than previous editions. From the initial federal habeas petition all the way to the United States Supreme Court's petition for

write of certiorari – and everything in between – in laymen's terms Russell explains how it all works.

Chapter nine contains a couple of payment options for those interested in retaining Russell's services. In addition to hourly rates, and a federal flat fee, he offers a one-of-its-kind "Pro-Per Plan" for the state level with a flat fee as well.

An expanded appendix contains a wide range of forms and sample pleadings: Traverse, Notice of Appeal, Certificate of Appealability, state (MC-275 Form, California) and federal (2254) habeas petitions, and step-by-step instructions on how to fill out the state petition. Moreover, new additions to the appendix include instructions for filling out the federal form, the California Rules of Court, and a Pro Se Habeas Handbook from the U.S. District Court (Southern District).

Other features include a "Habeas Claims Table," with 136 winning issues. This index enables one to quickly identify what Constitutional principles apply and which United States Supreme Court cases to cite and research. Additionally, Russell's "Habeas Hints" column, which appears quarterly in *Prison Legal News*, has been incorporated into the text as well.

Obtaining relief from the courts is often a lesson in futility, yet Russell's written work on the AEDPA and habeas corpus is invaluable. While the *California Habeas Handbook* is in a class by itself, one should always research one's claims as thoroughly as possible.

To order, send \$29.99 (inmate price; others add \$5 for shipping and handling) to Kent A. Russell, California Habeas Handbook, 2299 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA, 94115.



LSPC PREGNANT PRISONER CAMPAIGN TAKES OFF

"On 9/7/04, Antoinette went for a prenatal check up at VSPW and was sent to the hospital because she was beginning to dilate. She was shackled by her ankle to the gurney on the way to the hospital, not shackled while being checked in the ER, then shackled for the next three weeks while waiting to go into labor. ... [S]he was shackled to the bed and had to ask to go to the bathroom or to turn over. She was minimum security this whole time, already endorsed to the mother-infant program."

– From Karen Shain's testimony to California's Senate Public Safety Committee, June 2005

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) has engaged in a partnership with five students from San Francisco State's School of Public Health who have embarked on a three-semester project to investigate the health needs of incarcerated pregnant women. We are currently working on four fronts:

- *California State Legislature:* We are working closely with State Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, sponsor of AB 478. This important bill provides for minimum standards of care for pregnant incarcerated women: Prenatal medical care as needed, including vitamins and special diets; dental care, including at least one cleaning during the course of pregnancy; and an end to shackling of women during transport and delivery, unless there is a pressing security need.
- *Dental care for pregnant prisoners:* This spring LSPC began a partnership with five students from San Francisco State University's Masters in Public Health (MPH) program. The group will focus on dental health for pregnant women incarcerated at VSPW. They have already spent one semester with us, and will continue through Spring 2006.

Dental care was chosen as the focus of this project because oral health can have a drastic impact on the health of both infants and mothers. Infections in the mouth can trigger a hormonal imbalance that causes pre-term deliveries, resulting in low birth weight, pre-eclampsia, and an overall higher chance for infant mortality.

The goal of the program is to improve dental care for pregnant women in California prisons and protect the health of their babies.

- *Alternatives to incarceration:* In the mid 1980s, the California legislature instituted the California Prisoner-Mother Program (CPMP). The CPMP is designed to be an alternative to incarceration for pregnant women and those with children under six years old who fit a set of criteria. Currently, the program has three facilities and houses up to 70 women and their children. This year, we began looking at these facilities in order to understand how they function and what the conditions of confinement are for these women and their young children. We plan to offer suggestions for improvement and possibly expansion to the legislature during the next session.

- *Individual advocacy:* We are meeting individually with pregnant women at Valley State as well as at the CPMPs to ensure that they get proper medical and dental care and that they have workable plans for the future of their babies.

Our work in support of pregnant and post-partum incarcerated women can be heartbreaking at times, but we are continually impressed by the strength and determination of the women we work with. ★

From: Legal Services for Prisoners With Children Newsletter, Summer/Fall 2005, 1540 Market Street, Suite 490, San Francisco, CA 94102.

SOME GOOD NEWS FOR WOMEN PRISONERS

- The ban on non-emergency cross gender pat searches of women prisoners was put into force on Wednesday September 7. Please send any feedback to Corey at CPF about the effectiveness of the new rule at the four facilities for women in CA. Thanks to all those who worked on this with the women inside.
- California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill into law on October 7 that bans the practice of shackling female prisoners during labor, delivery and recovery. Female prisoners typically give birth in locked hospital wards under the supervision of armed guards. The law also makes it illegal to deny inmates prenatal and postpartum care, access to vitamins or basic dental cleanings. Women are the fastest growing segment of the national prison population, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Between 1995 and 2004, the average annual increase among

women in prison was 5 percent as compared to 3.3 percent for men. There were more than 103,000 women incarcerated in prisons in 2004. ★

HORRORS AT CHOWCHILLA CENTRAL CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S FACILITY

At CCWF a meeting was held with Captain Callahan on "B" yard. Elected inmate housing representatives of the Women's Advisory Council (W.A.C.) spoke about issues confronting prisoners on the yard.

The captain told us that the warden is negotiating a contract with sanitation companies to restore a portable toilet on each yard so that prisoners may have some flexibility when outside their buildings. There is no projected date for when the toilet will arrive.

He said there are talks in Sacramento to remove levels one and two inmates from prisons in order to rehabilitate them in community settings.

There is no projected date for such a program initiation but the captain assures it will be "years" off.

What Captain Callahan did have a projected date for is the addition of a ninth bed, locker and prisoner to each cell in the housing units. In rooms originally designed for four prisoners, we will now have nine. We were told, if all goes "well," the extra inmates will be in place by the coming Christmas. By the end of 2006, he told us, there will be 32 extra prisoners in each of four housing units on all three permanent yards. This total equals 384, plus 220 more in bunks in the gym.

Title XV, the regulation code governing state prisoner programs, was recently amended in the interest of gender specificity regarding women. It now allows level four inmates (longtermers and lifers) to be imprisoned in dorm housing, unlike men. This means we can be crammed even more tightly together. Gender specificity has resulted not in confinement relief but in more discomfort.

Women prisoners are very upset about this. It is likely tensions will rise, fights between and over girlfriends will escalate, and women who have endured decades in custody, some with no possible release dates, will see their little bits of space shrink to nothing.

Last week the guards began carrying collapsible batons. With a flick of the wrist, a strong metal rod shoots out to a length approximately 2 1/2 feet long.

Many guards are chomping at the bit to administer sanctioned beatings. A majority of female prisoners have been victims of physical abuse in their lives, and much more than the new potent clothes-dyeing pepper spray recently introduced in a liberal manner, they fear these coming beatings. I should note, as with female prisoners, there is a small coterie of guards, about 25%, who cause all the trouble. All of us are continually locked down over disturbances caused by the same people over and over again. So, too, it is with the guards. ★

—Sara Olson



IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Our mailing list is a mess and must be cleaned up. As much as 50 percent of our prisoner addresses are bad. Unless you send a post card or letter to the address below your name will be removed from the *Prison Focus* mailing list.

**California Prison Focus
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San Francisco, CA 94103**

**Verify your address today
and continue to receive this
newsletter.**

RECENT HISTORY

Summarized by Craig Gilmore

TEXAS EXECUTES FIRST BLACK WOMAN SINCE DEATH PENALTY RESUMED

Frances Newton became the third woman, and the first Black woman, executed in Texas since that state resumed use of the death penalty. About three dozen people protested outside Huntsville Unit. "I know I did not murder my kids and my family," she said in a death row interview.

Associated Press, Sept. 14, 2005

CA GOV SIGNS ONE BILL AND VETOS OTHER

Gov. Schwarzenegger signed the Sexual Abuse in Detention Elimination Act (AB 550), designed to end prisoner rape.

The bill establishes the Office of the Sexual Abuse in Detention Ombudsperson and mandates that the CDCR create new policies regarding placement, education and counseling of prisoners and collect data on sexual assault which will be available to the public.

"The passage of this law is a significant milestone for California, finally giving this all-too-common human rights violation the attention it deserves," said Katherine Hall-Martinez, a spokesperson for Stop Prisoner Rape.

Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill which would have allowed journalists access to prisoners. He became the third consecutive California governor to veto such legislation, joining Gray Davis and Pete Wilson.

Gloria Romero, who co-authored the bill with Ray Haynes, said, "I am especially disappointed that, after working with me earlier this year to launch substantive reforms in California corrections, the governor would not join me in shining more light on the system through an increase in media freedom."

Associated Press, Oct. 8, 2005;
Stop Prisoner Rap, Sept. 22, 2005
(www.spr.org).

CHINO INCIDENT

About 200 prisoners rioted at the reception center at Chino. The melee lasted from approximately 7:00 p.m. until after 10:00. Five prisoners were hospitalized after the incident.

Fresno Bee, Sept. 23, 2005

SALINAS LOCKDOWN PROTEST

In response to an extended lockdown at Salinas Valley State Prison, six female family members of prisoners protested outside the prison gates. In response, SVSP called the California Highway Patrol, the Soledad Police Department and the Monterey County Sheriff for backup.

One of the protestors, Terry Fry, was told by SVSP spokesperson Lt. Bill Muniz that the women's continued protest could backfire. "He made it perfectly clear that what we are doing could cause the lockdown to last longer," she said.

In response to pressure from SVSP staff and worry that their family members inside could face retaliation, the women have called off their protest. Instead they wait. "That's what I've done for the last 13 years: wait indefinitely," said Fry.

Monterey Herald, Aug. 15, 2005

FATAL SHOOTING AT CALIPATRIA

Richard Albert Zamora, 33, was shot and killed during a melee in an exercise yard at Calipatria. Another prisoner, Richard Daniel Jacobo, was airlifted to a local hospital with gunshot wounds and blunt force trauma injury to the head.

According to a prison spokesperson, Zamora was shot once in the hip and died at the prison.

Four other prisoners were taken to outside hospitals for treatment and 25 more treated at the prison. Sixteen officers were treated for injury, none required an overnight hospital stay.

Ninety prisoners were placed in ad-seg pending investigation.

Associated Press, Aug. 19, 2005;
San Diego Union-Tribune, Sept. 4, 2005

SF BOARD URGES JOB APP CHANGE

The Board of Supervisors in San Francisco voted unanimously to urge the city and county to remove questions about prior convictions from job applications.

The resolution does not prohibit criminal background checks or asking about convictions during interviews.

Discrimination against the formerly in-

carcerated is a major barrier to successful reentry and reduced recidivism, and many believe that such discrimination has increased since the 9/11 attacks.

Approximately eight percent of the working age population has felony records. A Princeton researcher found that admitting to a drug conviction reduced the chance of getting a job interview by 50 percent for white applicants and 67 percent for Black applicants.

All of Us or None, who see banning the box as one step in securing civil rights for the formerly incarcerated, championed the measure.

Los Angeles Times, Oct. 12, 2005

CYA REHIRES VIOLENT GUARDS

The State Personnel Board voted to force the state to rehire six c/os who were fired after their beating of a prisoner at N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility was made public. The six will resume their jobs and receive full back pay.

The Board ruled that witnesses for the guards were more persuasive than witnesses against them and the videotape was inconclusive because it did not show the beginning of the assault.

The video shows Counselor Delwin Brown landing 28 punches to the head of a young prisoner who is face down and unresisting. Another employee repeatedly sprays the youth with pepper spray after he is subdued.

Organizers across the state continue to call for the closure of Chaderjian, which has had nine superintendents in five years and recently lost accreditation for its high school.

Los Angeles Times, Aug. 31, 2005;
Associated Press, Aug. 30, 2005

PRISONERS AFTER KATRINA

Thousands of prisoners in New Orleans jails were evacuated during the floods following Hurricane Katrina but many were also abandoned.

Nearly 500 women were shipped to Angola, where they face uncertain futures, since many jail and court records were destroyed in the floods.

Up to 600 New Orleans prisoners were left without food or water in flooded jail cells for up to four days, and that as many as 300 New Orleans prisoners are unaccounted for according to Human Rights Watch. New Orleans officials deny that any prisoners died during the flooding, but one 30-year veteran c/o said, "Ain't no tellin'

what happened to those people.”

“Of all the nightmares during Hurricane Katrina, this must be one of the worst,” said Corinne Carey, researcher from Human Rights Watch. “Prisoners were abandoned in their cells without food or water for days as floodwaters rose toward the ceiling.”

For those seeking to locate incarcerated family members who were evacuated from the affected parishes, the DOC has established two hotlines where you can find out where your family member is and can leave a message for that family member letting them know where you are. The numbers are 225-342-3998 and 225-342-5935. The hotline is open between 7a.m. and 10p.m. CST. There is also a website run by the Louisiana Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, which is tracking prisoners: <http://www.lacdlinmatetracking.blogspot.com>. Critical Resistance and other activist groups have demanded amnesty for all those jailed during the flooding.

New York Times, Oct. 2, 2005;

Human Rights Watch Sept. 22, 2005

DETAINEES SIT-IN AT LANCASTER

Over 900 federal detainees staged a sit-in, refusing to return to their cells, because of delays in their deportation hearings.

The Mira Loma Detention Center holds approximately 950 of the 20,000 immigrants detained while awaiting hearings. As the number of immigrants rounded up and jailed increases, the wait for a hearing date gets longer.

The Detention Center is run by the Los Angeles County Sheriff on contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and has been the site of protests dating back to at least 1997.

Los Angeles Times, Sept. 22, 2005

U.K. PRISONERS TO GET VOTE?

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the laws that disenfranchise Britain's 48,000 prisoners are violations of basic human rights and should be voided.

The case was brought before the court by John Hirst, convicted of killing his landlady with an ax and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1980. After the decision, Hirst said, “The human rights court has agreed with me that the government's position is wrong - it doesn't matter how heinous the crime, everyone is entitled to have the basic human right to vote.”

The Guardian, Oct. 6, 2005

HUNGER STRIKES IN EL SALVADOR PRISONS

Prisoners at six prisons in El Salvador, many former U.S. residents, staged hunger strikes in September.

Prisoner demands include: Respect and moral and physical integrity of those incarcerated, psychological attention, right to receive family and conjugal visits, recreational, cultural and religious activities, adequate food, education and vocational training, social Reinsertion program, a fair and legal judicial process, no arbitrary transfers to maximum security prisons, and the abolition or derogation of the Super Mano Dura because is an attempt on the right of life and it violates all the elements of ones rights and guaranties of being human based on national and international law.

El Salvador is among the Central American countries who have instituted Mano Dura (Stong Hand) laws, similar to U.S. Broken Windows or Zero Tolerance policing. Many of those arrested are former U.S. residents, deported after a felony conviction in the U.S.

Homies Unidos press conference;

—Los Angeles, Oct. 5, 2005

RACIAL PROFILING AT BJS?

A high ranking official at the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the government agency that compiles statistics about the country's police, jails and prisons, has been threatened and forced out of his job after complaining that Justice Department officials in the Bush Administration buried a BJS report on racial profiling by U.S. police.

Lawrence A. Greenfeld was named by Bush to head BJS in 2001 after over 20 years work in the agency. As the study was about to be released, the Justice Department tried to hide the report.

“My suspicions always go up if a report like this is just deep-sixed,” said Representative John Conyers of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The BJS report showed that after being stopped by a police officer, Latinos had their cars searched 11.4 percent of the time.

For Black drivers, 10.2 percent were searched. Whites were searched in 3.5 percent of stops and were less often threatened with the use of force and more often sent on their way without a ticket.

New York Times, Aug. 23, 2005

COURTS LOOK FOR HEALTH CARE RECEIVER

After putting the CDCR (formerly the CDoC) health system into receivership, Judge Thelton Henderson has begun a nationwide search for someone to run the system for the federal court. In the interim, he appointed John Hagar Correctional Expert to the court. Mr. Hagar has met with union officials to strategize how to recruit more qualified health care workers to the system.

“This failure of political will, combined with a massive escalation in the rate of incarceration over the past few decades, has led to a serious and chronic abnegation of state responsibility for basic medical needs of prisoners,” Judge Henderson wrote. “Too frequently medical care decisions are pre-empted by custodial staff who have been given improper managerial responsibility over medical decision making.”

San Jose Mercury News, Oct. 4, 2005

ONE OF TEN PRISONERS ARE LIFERS

A *New York Times* survey has discovered that ten percent of prisoners in the U.S. are serving life sentences, and that almost three in ten of lifers are sentenced to life without the possibility of parole (LWOP).

Two thirds of lifers are sentenced on murder charges, and sixteen percent for drugs.

The report noted that U.S. sentencing laws are unlike laws in other industrial countries. “Western Europeans regard 10 or 12 years as an extremely long term, even for offenders sentenced in theory to life,” said James Q. Whitman, law professor at Yale.

Many countries will not extradite those accused of crimes to the U.S. when they face LWOP. An Italian judge who pardoned the man convicted of attempting the assassination of the Pope, said, “No one stays 20 years in prison.”

New York Times, Oct. 1, 2005

AI DETAILS POLICE ABUSE OF LGBT

A recent Amnesty International report shows widespread abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people by U.S. police.

Dr. William F. Schulz, Executive Director of AIUSA, said, “Some, including transgender individuals, people of color and the young suffer disproportionately, especially when poverty leaves them vulnerable to homelessness and exploitation and

less likely to draw public outcry or official scrutiny. It is a sorry state of affairs when the police misuse their power to inflict suffering rather than prevent it."

The report looked at practices in the nation's 50 largest cities and Washington D.C.

"Every human being, without exception, has the right to live free from discrimination and abuse, yet LGBT people nationwide are afraid to report hate crimes or other abuses to the police, who at times prove themselves to be the criminals," said Michael Heflin of AI.

Amnesty International press release, Sept. 22, 2005

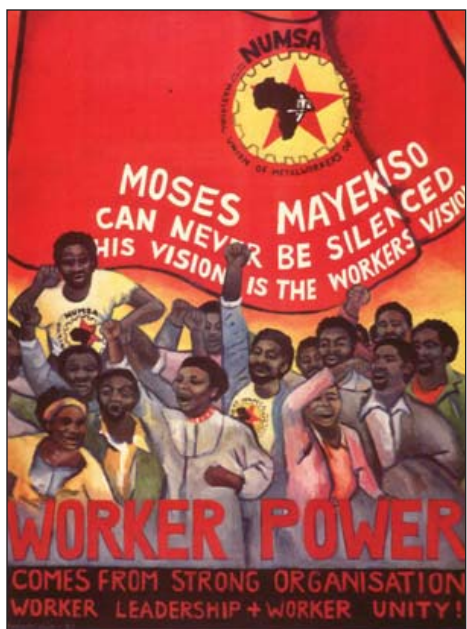
INCREASE IN IMMIGRANT PROSECUTIONS SINCE 9/11

Since Sept. 11, 2001 federal prosecutions for immigration violations have more than doubled, pushing them past drug crimes as the most frequently prosecuted federal crimes, according to a new study by Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University.

Federal drug crime prosecutions dropped between 2001 and 2004 from 32,753 to 30,988. But last year more than 38,000 people were brought up on immigration charges.

The study contends that many matters that would once have been handled as administratively are now being referred to prosecutors. In South Texas, prosecutors went into super drive against immigration crimes last year. The number of cases sent to prosecutors increased from 4,062 to 18,092.

New York Times, Sept. 29, 2005



IMMIGRANTS: LOCKED IN/ LOCKED OUT

The situation for incarcerated women who are also immigrants has always been difficult and becomes worse all the time. The number of people locked up in California who are not citizens has been on the rise for the past dozen years. Almost half of people incarcerated in United States federal prisons are non-native English speakers. An incarcerated woman who does not speak English in California's English-only prisons has trouble seeking medical or legal help and certainly cannot fully function within the prison system on a daily basis. Often, immigrant families must use the translation help of young children in order to understand complicated legal intricacies of prison system that is not designed to be helpful to anyone.

The nightmarish situation for immigrant women in prison reflects the brutish realities which immigrants face in the United States every day. Immigrants in this country, documented or undocumented, live in a continual state of struggle for survival and also of resistance. Harassment, racism and exploitation are not far way from any of us. Our human rights are constantly violated. We don't even have full freedom to walk around without fear that the *Migra* (now Homeland Security), the police or the minutemen will take the opportunity to put us in prison, deport us or beat us to death. When Governor Schwarzenegger encourages the ultra-right-wing minutemen to help parole the border, we see paramilitarism becoming an accepted policy in California which in turn promotes other forms of racism against immigrants.

We leave our home countries because of U.S. foreign policies that devastated our economy and politics, forcing us to leave our family and land. Entire communities are separated and subjected to double exploitation. Our situation is a direct consequence of policies like the Free Trade Agreement, the International Monetary Fund, war occupation, sanctions, blockades, and the exploitation of our natural resources.

When we do get to the United States we are treated like criminals. Now an actual wall is being built across the southern part of what today is called the United States but is land which used to be part of Mexico. This wall divides Mexican families and is intended to lock out Mexicans and other Latinos. It is similar in its racist purpose to the wall which has been erected in Pales-

tine to lock Palestinians out of land which is theirs but is now called Israel. What a coincidence that both walls are called "security fences."

But there is not "security" for immigrants in the countries which have conquered and occupied their land. Instead, since the infamous war on terror started, we've seen an intense wave of attacks against non-whites immigrant communities, and more immigrants are being locked up for "security reasons." Freedom died and democracy exploded when the U.S. sent immigrant soldiers to destroy the lives of thousands of Iraqis based on wholesale lies.

We need to understand in more detail the ways in which immigrant women are being railroaded to prison and once there are suffering in specific, terrible ways. We need to condemn the mass targeting of immigrants because it is an injury to all of us. The struggle for immigrant rights is a struggle for the liberation of people of color around the world and is our uprising here in the belly of the beast.

Reprinted from the newsletter of California Coalition for Women Prisoners

Active Continued from page 7

letter which is reason enough for taking up such activities. Other things I do to keep busy include helping others with their legal cases (civil and criminal), filing grievances every time I see a grievable issue no matter if it's personal or if it involves another prisoner, keeping log books/charts of all mail, memos (kites) this helps in storing in order the paper work which I do not discard in hopes of using it as evidence against my keepers at a latter date. And most importantly read! Especially books which further one's knowledge. I am one who discourages those that fill one's time on "junk novels" and encourage subjects like politics, science, poetry, how to books and reference publications. Personally I just love to soak my brain into anything dealing with technology and its related issues. Now everyone may not want to follow a schedule like mine, but that's what the imagination is for. Just use whatever know-how you have obtained from past experiences and education then shape it into something productive. By this you will stonewall the boredom devil, hopefully conserve sanity and make your isolation as little more bearable. In all, if you want to survive that long-term isolation, the mind and body needs to continually be fully alive. ★

A MODEST PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH SLAVERY IN AMERICA

With the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in December of 1865, it would seem that slavery was officially abolished in all areas of the U.S., but for the seemingly minor exception of punishment for a crime. Yet, notwithstanding the occupation of the South by the Union Army, the ink was not dry on the parchment when the dreaded "Black Codes" began to be enacted to put the newly freed slaves back into chains.

Ex-slaves who could not prove they had regular employment were arrested and ordered to pay a stiff fine. If they could not pay, they were hired out in involuntary servitude. Black children were condemned to serve as apprentices in local industry. The chain gang and the contract labor became a regular feature of the political economy, alongside sharecropping, Jim Crow segregation, lynching and KKK terror. Deprived of the vote, citizenship was an empty cup.

Despite the gains of the Civil Rights Movement, the chain gang is back and so is contract labor for prisoners. In the ten former slave states, those who have ever been convicted of a felony are denied the right to vote, as are all of the more than two million prisoners throughout the U.S. All across America, we have witnessed the rise of a new era of slavery, as prison populations have more than tripled in the past three decades. The lines between the criminal justice system and free enterprise have been blurred with the rise of the prison-industrial complex.

The mostly Black, Hispanic and Native American prison populations are ground down by cruel and unusual punishment while being denied a political voice and basic human rights and dignity and are subjected to exploitation by the multinational corporations as a captive labor force. This has nothing to do with rehabilitation. You can't teach citizenship through slavery!

To put an end to this cruelest of oppressions and violation of the inalienable rights of the People, we call for the immediate amendment of the 13th Amendment to end slavery for all, and the extension of universal suffrage to all, including prisoners. We declare all elections not based upon full universal suffrage to be invalid and powers not derived from the consent of the government to be usurpations. ★

"Single acts of tyranny may be ascribed to the accidental opinion of a day; but a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period and pursued unalterably through every change of ministers, too plainly prove a deliberate, systematic plan of reducing [a people] to slavery."

--Thomas Jefferson, *Right of British America*, 1774.

United States Constitution, 13th Amendment:

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

*From: The New Black Panther Party
- Prison Chapter (NBPP-PC)
The Red Heart Warriors Society
(RHWS)*

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR AMNESTY FOR THE PRISONERS OF KATRINA

Critical Resistance is a national grassroots organization that works to end the reliance on prisons and policing as responses to what are social, economic and political problems. We have three U.S. offices – one of which was in the Mid City neighborhood of New Orleans – and 11 chapters, one of which is in New Orleans. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we know that prisoners and prisoners' family members have been among the most adversely affected.

- Prisoners were left to drown in jail cells.
- Thousands of people in New Orleans area jails were separated from their families, not knowing whether their loved ones are alive or dead.
- Prisoners were refused the right to call their loved ones or held at gunpoint on freeway overpasses.
- Thousands of prisoners were moved to at least 35 different prisons across, many are facing the prospect of not being released as scheduled, and an unknown number have had their cases thrown into chaos by lost evidence and records.

- Nearly 230 people have been booked in a makeshift jail set up in a New Orleans Greyhound Station, the vast majority for the 'crime' of feeding and clothing themselves during the hurricane. The jail has been called "a real start to rebuilding this city."

- And, the city is under immense lockdown.

The criminalization of people taking care of themselves and their communities during and after Hurricane Katrina mirrors the larger criminal legal system. The rebuilding of New Orleans must challenge that system to address genuine public safety and community needs.

We believe a first step demands amnesty for those arrested in the aftermath of Katrina for the 'crime' of trying to take care of themselves and their families and for those whose cases have been impacted by Katrina.

We need your organization, church, school, community group to join us in calling for amnesty. We hope you will consider signing on to the following demand and joining us in working for real public safety.

We the undersigned demand unconditional amnesty for people impacted by Hurricane Katrina who were, or might be, arrested or charged for trying to take care of themselves and their families and friends, and that those already in the system, whose cases are potentially affected by Katrina, be released immediately. We further demand that all records of their criminalization be permanently erased from the records of all municipal, state, federal, credit, and employment agencies.

We make these demands with the long-term goals of rebuilding New Orleans in a way that fosters genuine public safety and addresses real community needs.

By "Amnesty" we mean that no one should be arrested, charged, tried, sentenced, fined, imprisoned, jailed, detained, involuntarily relocated, or deported.

Please sign onto the call for amnesty by contacting Critical Resistance at (510) 444-0484, via email crnational@criticalresistance.org, or write to 1904 Franklin St., Suite 504, Oakland, CA 94612. ★



POETRY PAGE

THE SOUNDS OF PRISON

Clliiiiiddrrriiicckkk! Is the sound of the handcuffs that captured us
Cllaaanggg! Is the sound of the steel-barred doors.
That close by remote control and seal our fate.
Blunk-blunk-blunk is the sound of the cage door opening
Giving us temporary leave to complete the purpose
Of our enslavement.

Click-click/click-click/click-click NEEXXTTT!

Screams the voice of the drone

Who captures your impression into an

Ever-expanding data base.

Get up—Sit down! Turn around! Bend over!

Put your hands on your head!

Lift your feet! Open your mouth! Shut the hell up! Lift your arm!—

Put your hands down slowly! Lift this bale! Clean this asbestos!

Pull that can over here! Lights on! Go to sleep!

Everybody up! –Eat! –Stop eating! –Lights out!—Get over here, now!

Face the wall! –Head down!

Hands behind your back!—

Do you understand me boy!!! Because

If you so much as breathe

You're dead!

Damon C. Scott

S.H.U.

I am brought before a committee of men,
Insidious irony, subtle words of the pen.
They smile in my face, they reach for my soul,
Letting misery and solitude take their toll.

Announcing their judgment with noses held high
The power they flaunt will make you sigh.
I live in oppression, I live in a cage,
With all of my anger building up to a rage.

I have been given an indeterminate SHU.
You ask what that means?! You mean this is new?!
Averaging twenty-three hours a day in a cell,
A windowless closet, a solitary hell.

Sensory deprivation, a prison within a prison.
Creative insanity or inspiring vision?
Living my life like a chaotic scream,
Someone please wake me from this horrible dream.

Not wanting to give in, not wanting to die,
If I were not a man, I would surely cry.
I shall not feel the sun's warming ray,
For I will be in Pelican Bay.

Robert Perrine ("Sykes")

DUST IF YOU MUST

Dust if you must but wouldn't it be better
To paint a picture or write a letter,
Bake a cake or plant a seed?
Ponder the difference between want and need.

Dust if you must but there's not much time,
With rivers to swim and mountains to climb!
Music to hear and books to read,
Friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must but the world's out there
With the sun in your eyes, the wind in your
hair,
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain.
This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must but bear in mind,
Old age will come and it's not kind.
And when you go and go you must,
You, yourself, will make more dust.

Christopher A.

CAGED UP

Locked in a cell
With concrete walls
Old chipped paint
And a steel bathroom stall

A metal bed frame
Colored green and bright
Scratched up floors
And a glowing white light

Recycled air
Flowing through the vent
The smell of depression
A sullen scent

Constant yelling
And prying eyes
Surrounded by people
Full of anger and lies

Cuffed on the move
And shackled down
Whenever you walk
There's guards all around

Guns always loaded
Sights always drawn
One act of aggression
And your life could be gone

Ten-minute showers
And back to the cell
Knife fights and fist fights
A never-ending hell

Alone with our thoughts
As the years go by
Life without freedom
Caged up 'til we die

Sean Bromley

Photo on left. Left to right Cynthia, Ed, Corey, and Noelle holding up the CPF banner at anti-war demo.



Letters Continued from page 2

“compliant.” He bases this argument on the fact that in his opinion they have given up on the struggle. Number one, Mr. C.L., many of those now classified as SNY on a physical scale are more dangerous than 70 percent of CDCR’s general population; two, how can you fight for better conditions with everyone on the yard fighting each other which in turn provides the evidence needed to justify the course of action the administration is currently bent on? The first and foremost objective of anyone who finds himself confined is the ascertainment of his or her freedom. Second is a stress-free environment within the prison so that the individual can focus on the means to obtain freedom. If Mr. C.L. thinks prison is life and life is prison he should not be ranting about the conditions therein.

—Tracye B. Washington, Tehachapi, CA

SUCCESS AT HIGH DESERT

Dear CPF:

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you and all 100-plus prisoners who participated in the single-cell and/or hunger strike protest here at HDSP’s 2-Unit (Ad Seg) during the months of May and July 2005, that your sacrifice and/or support in our struggle to improve our living conditions paid off in a big way. As most of you already know, our protest achieved a steady flow of prisoners transferring out of 2-Unit to other prisons within a week from our suspending the protest to give officials here a grace period to consider our grievances and grant our requested actions, among which transfers was one. These transfers still continue even into Sept.

I am also happy to announce that our protest restored all of the banned canteen items (i.e., hygiene products, coffee and soups).

On a final note, I would like to thank all of you who played a role in making these improved changes possible. Our unity knew no racial or geographical boundaries, and I have no doubt that was where our strength lied. Our solidarity in the noble cause was our ace in the deck; it was what made our success possible. You have borne witness to the power of unity in a struggle for a common cause. And with that, I leave you with these wise words by Clarence Darrow, lawyer, 1930: “As long as the world shall last, there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever.”

—S. Leon, Susanville, CA

TVS IN AD SEG

Dear CPF:

In your *Prison Focus* issue #23, Summer 2005, a Tehachapi inmate wrote on page 2 under letters indicated “privilege group D and/or ‘D’ status Administrative Segregation (Ad Seg) inmates are being required to send their personal TVs home and not allowed to purchase another for one year (from Walkenhorst).” Here is more information on this issue:

It is true that the administration did try to change the Title XV through the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) in an attempt to take all TVs from privilege group D (D status) Ad Seg and SHU inmates. However, this proposed change to the Director’s rules was later withdrawn/repealed and reverted back to prior status. See Notice of Changes to Director’s Rules (NCDR), number 03/06, date issues 12-30-03, Effective Date Immediately, Public Comment Period was on 3-5-04; however NCDR, number 04/03, date issues 6-1-04, effective date Immediately, comment period 8-12-04 repealed the changes to 3044(g)(4)(6) and reverted it back to its prison reading/status.

As to only being able to use a single vendor (Walkenhorst) in your Ad Seg is in violation of the CCR, Title XV as you’re required to be able to choose between three vendors not just one. See NCDR, number 04/03 under the Initial Statement of Reasons, which states in pertinent part, “The department will ensure that the vendor process will be fair and equitable to all inmates and their correspondents by allowing competitive pricing by utilizing multiple vendors. Vendors with higher prices or inferior merchandise will lose business to vendors with lower prices or superior merchandise as inmates and their correspondents will make purchases based on a combination of cost and quality.”

—P. Cockeroft, Crescent City, CA

A RECENT VISIT TO CORCORAN

By Sally Bystroff

On November 7, CPF made an investigative visit to Corcoran and brought three new investigators. There is no better way for us to keep people informed of what is really happening in California prisons than for us to visit, meet and hear from the people affected.

Good news: we were told the fallen kitchen in 1A yard has been repaired. I hope the mold has been cleaned out on that unit. Let us know.

Bad news: There are still some serious problems with the 602 process. We have found some prisoners get their 602s answered and some are totally rejected. It would be helpful to know what the dynamics behind the rejections are: are certain c/os responsible for most of the rejections? Is it a problem in a specific unit? Do particular prisoners always have a problem getting their 602s heard? Reminder: if your 602 is not responded to in the appropriate time frame then appeal your appeal. Keep track of what you are doing - the complaint, the date and the c/os involved. Please let us know about any successful 602 appeals.

FYI: CPF is actively recruiting new volunteers in order to keep up with our mail. We do read and value your letters.

Please write and tell us about classes that start up, any roof repairs, the start up of transitional housing units, or whatever is happening that makes life go better for you. We want to track for the promised changes that come with adding the word “rehabilitation” to the now-called California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations. I want to hear from Corcoran inmates when COs follow thru on 602’s that are granted. We are very concerned about the rogue group of COs at work beating men, especially mental health patients in 3A. That issue is going to the Warden and to Sacramento. ★



CPF members Cynthia and Ed display anti-war banner at a recent protest.



PRISON FOCUS

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PRISON FOCUS 2006

Prison Focus #25: If I could tell the children: Letters and essays from prisoners to home.

Prison Focus #26 and 27: Send us your ideas on topics you would like to see us focus on in the next couple of issues. We'll choose from what is submitted. Deadline for ideas is February 15, 2006.

CPF GOALS

1. End all human rights abuses against prisoners.
2. End the use of long-term isolation.
3. Close the Security Housing Units.
4. Offer rehabilitation of SHU prisoners as torture survivors.
5. Improve medical care and living conditions for prisoners living with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening diseases.
6. Help gain compassionate release for prisoners with serious illnesses and physical disabilities.
7. Stop all discrimination against LGBT prisoners.
8. Abolish the prison system as we know it.

ABOUT CPF

California Prison Focus is a non-profit community-based human rights organization working with and for California prisoners. Our two main issue areas are fighting against the long term isolation, torture and abuse of Security Housing Units (SHU) and demanding an end to the medical neglect and abuse of prisoners with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening diseases. The focus of our work is our investigative trips to women and men's prisons with SHU facilities and/or medical units. We make at least one visit per month. We work to build strong bridges between the prisoners and the community, and to bring forth the voice of the prisoners through our newsletter, Prison Focus, and our ongoing educational outreach and community forums. Central to our work is training ourselves, prisoners and their loved ones in self-advocacy through public protest, networking, coalition building, letter writing and contacting prison officials and policymakers.

Founded in 1991 (as Pelican Bay Information Project) we have made 100 prison visits and conducted more than 3,000 interviews with prisoners. Our membership is comprised of prisoners, activists, family members of prisoners, former prisoners, human rights advocates, attorneys, and prison visitors.

CONTACT US

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Phone: (415) 252-9211 - Fax: (415) 252-9311

E-mail: info@prisons.org - Website: www.prisons.org.

SOME GUIDELINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRISON FOCUS

Some suggestions for submissions:

- Artwork or graphics
- Letters (250 words) Let us know if you want us to use your name or we will only publish your initials and city & state of residence. You can also specify "anonymous."
- Short Articles (250-500 words) The same identification guidelines apply. Topics can be issue specific, or current news or information.
- Helpful resources with address and pertinent information.
- Larger articles are accepted but be aware-our space is limited.

Topics: PF topic of issue; current news; recent or pending legislation or policy; news from your institution; organizing efforts; books-basically anything related to the prison industrial complex as you see it. Individual legal cases are not usually printed.

Sorry, we cannot return your submissions unless a prior arrangement is made. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published and we generally cannot respond to your submissions because of the volume. Please consider them a contribution to the work. PF welcomes all submissions!

ATTEND MEETINGS

CPF's general meeting is the second Wednesday of the month at our office at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Please join us to discuss important topics affecting California prisoners and to familiarize yourself with our day-to-day work.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Come to our monthly volunteer night, every third Wednesday of the month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., held at our offices or make an appointment to meet with us for another time. CPF depends on volunteers to do our invaluable work. We need your help answering mail, working on our newsletter, staffing our office, fundraising, and outreach.